



## ***CIVIL SOCIETY PROGRAM DESIGN PROGRESS REPORT***

As part of USAID's commitment to provide continuing updates about its new civil society activities, we present our sixth progress report which features a short summary of USAID's system of open competition for awarding grants, a summary of grants already awarded, some general information on grants USAID anticipates awarding in the coming year, and an update on an NGO study tour which will be sponsored by USAID and the Public Affairs Section of the American Embassy.

### **Open competition for grants**

In awarding grants to NGOs, USAID emphasises full and open competition. Generally, there are two methods for soliciting applications which USAID follows to meet its competition requirements for awarding grants:

- 1. Request for Applications (RFA)** – A Request for Application is a once-off solicitation document that calls for applications from interested and qualified entities who would like to compete for a proposed USAID funded grant. It is used when USAID intends to support a specific type of activity or methodology in keeping with its strategic objectives. To make sure that the public is aware of this competition, USAID or its contracting agent in South Africa normally publishes the RFA through newspapers and/or the internet.
- 2. Annual Program Statement (APS)** – An Annual Program Statement is generally used to generate competition for new areas where USAID intends to support a variety of creative approaches by the non-governmental community to develop their own methodologies in assessing and/or implementing activities which are in keeping with USAID's strategic objectives. An APS is often used to generate competition for new awards and take advantage of ongoing initiatives.

While USAID normally competes grants, there are some limited circumstances, defined in agency policy, which allow USAID to grant funds non-competitively. Under the Civil Society Strengthening program (CSSP), USAID has made use of these procedures in awarding three small grants to NGOs with existing programs that contribute to the strategic objective.

Generally and as a matter of practice, USAID does not fund unsolicited proposals.

More detailed information on USAID/South Africa can be found on our website located at [WWW.SN.APC.ORG/USAIDSA](http://WWW.SN.APC.ORG/USAIDSA)

### **Grants awarded to date**

Since approval of its new civil society strengthening program, USAID has funded three small grants and one larger cooperative grant agreement to South African non governmental organizations for the following activities:

1. **Promoting CSO/Government Partnerships:** To encourage service delivery partnerships between government, civil society and the private sector and to identify and highlight innovative and effective examples of service delivery, USAID is 1) funding an “Innovations in Government” exhibition designed to disseminate and support replication of good CSO-government partnerships for service delivery; and 2) supporting interns placed within a non profit organization to develop capacity and skills in public sector project evaluation.
2. **Enabling Tax Environment:** To help strengthen the financial sustainability of the not-for-profit sector, USAID is supporting the sector’s efforts for policy dialogue with stakeholders working in the enactment and implementation of the Income Tax Amendment Act. This Act offers tax exemptions to certain public benefit organizations and tax deductions to those making charitable contributions to public benefit organizations.
3. **CIVICUS Index Coordination:** To support the coordination and management of the CIVICUS Index Research Unit Cooperative Grant Agreement (#4 below), USAID made a small grant to the CIVICUS-selected national lead organization.
4. **CIVICUS Index Research Grant:** To assist ongoing efforts of civil society to gauge the overall health of South African civil society, USAID is supporting the development and management of a tool to promote research on the measurement and evaluation of significant changes in the condition of civil society over time. The ultimate aims of the Civil Society Index are to enhance the credibility and legitimacy of civil society at the national and international levels, build the capacity of civil society to achieve its vision and assess its impact, and raise awareness across different population groups and stakeholders. The grant for this activity was competed by USAID’s contracting agent in December/January. As a result of this process, a not-for-profit cooperative grant agreement will be awarded for this activity within the next few weeks.

### **Anticipated grants**

In the next two to three months, USAID anticipates soliciting applications for the following activities:

1. **RFA/NPO Tax Communication & Support Services Program:** Development and implementation of a communication strategy and a dedicated support program to assist CSOs to access the benefits of and compliance with the Non Profit Organization Act.
2. **RFA/Research Capacity Building Program:** Design and support of a research and development network on civil society and CSO/Government partnerships for service delivery and policy implementation.
3. **Annual Program Statement Grants (APS):** Up to three grants will be made to organizations that focus on any one of the following areas: 1) improving CSO-Government capacity for partnering; 2) increasing access to better information to facilitate CSO-government partnerships; and 3) enhancing enabling environment for partnerships.

Details on how and when to submit applications will be announced in the RFAs and APS.

### **Other activities: NGO delegation to the US**

In March of this year, USAID and the Public Affairs Section of the American Embassy is planning to send a delegation of six Civil Society Organization (CSO) stakeholders comprised of Government and NGO/CSO representatives to travel to the US for a two-week program to look at US strategic CSO/government partnerships. The main purpose of this delegation is to increase knowledge around the three main elements of USAID's new civil society strengthening program which include:

1. Improving CSO-Government capacity for partnering;
2. Increasing access to better information; and
3. Enhancing enabling environment for partnerships.

Participants have already been selected and will represent the following types of entities:

1. A regional NGO coalition
2. An information technology (IT) organization

3. A network of rural community-based organizations
4. An organizational development training NGO
5. The Department of Welfare
6. The National Development Agency (NDA)

The group will travel to the United States to meet with civil society leaders, practitioners, government officials, and academicians to learn ways of strengthening civil society partnerships in South Africa. It is hoped that the delegation's visit will increase knowledge around the above-mentioned three main civil society strengthening program elements through professional appointments with several U.S. government agencies, universities, large NGOs, CBOs, and CSO umbrella organizations. In addition, the group will attend two conferences that relate to civil society in the US. They include:

**The National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC) Annual Conference.**

With the theme of Economic Justice, this conference will bring together leading community development NGO/CBO representatives from across the US. NCRC has about 800 institutional members who focus on access to credit and capital as a civil right and they use the Community Reinvestment Act to create opportunities for jobs, housing, and businesses. This will be an opportunity for the participants to meet with progressive practitioners across several areas of interest and to see how civil society works in partnership with each other, government, and private industry. For more information refer to [www.ncrc.org](http://www.ncrc.org)

**The Independent Sector's Spring Research Forum entitled, "The Impact of Information Technology on Civil Society: How will Online Innovation, Philanthropy, and Volunteerism Serve the Common Good?"** More than 300 researchers, nonprofit and foundation leaders, government officials, business leaders, and technology experts are expected to participate making this an exciting venue for the delegation members to make valuable contacts and learn more about how information technology is impacting on the work of American non-profit organizations. For more information refer to [www.independentsector.org](http://www.independentsector.org)

It is hoped that the group will make a report on this trip upon their return which will be shared in our next newsflash.

For any questions or comments you may have, please contact:

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